

GERVAY HOMESTEAD NO. 2, SHEEPHERDER HUT
Along Cow Creek
Lovell vicinity
Big Horn County
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-162-A

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Intermountain Support Office - Denver
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

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Location: The site is located on both sides of Cow Creek along an unnamed access road, approximately one mile northwest of Mexican Hill, two miles southwest of Devil Canyon, and .75 mile west of the Bighorn National Forest boundary. The closest populated town is Lovell, Wyoming, approximately 21 miles west. USGS Mexican Hill Quadrangle, UTM coordinates 12. 736831.4975114.

Significance: This site is associated with the early twentieth-century livestock industry in Big Horn County (Criterion A). During this time period, the Little Mountain region was used for summer pasture for grazing livestock. The site, part of a 320-acre homestead parcel, is a component of a network of small buildings utilized for shelter by herders while managing livestock in this rugged and remote area. This site was the original location of the homestead improvements made to obtain a patent in 1925, but the land parcel was subsequently sold and absorbed into larger ranching operations on Little Mountain.

Description: Building A consists of a one-story, side-gabled wood frame building (20'4" E-W x 12'3" N-S) resting on dry-laid stone piers. The cabin is constructed with round nails and has weathered wood shiplap siding with corner trim. The gable roof is constructed with 2" x 6" rafters supporting a wood deck covered with green and black rolled roofing paper, most of which has blown off. The ridgeline of the roof is covered with metal trim. A round metal chimney protrudes from the rear roof slope near the northeast corner. A wood stove was formerly located in the corner of the cabin, but it has been removed. The roof has open eaves with exposed rafter ends. The south side of the building contains a 3-foot wide vertical slab single wood door supported by strap hinges and fastened with a sliding bolt handle. Windows consist of 4-light hinged units that swing inward with wooden sash. There are single windows in the east, west, and south sides and two windows in the north side of the building. The north side also contains a shortened portion of a wood panel door protected by a shed-roofed awning. The function of this feature is unknown. The interior of the cabin is unfinished with exposed stud walls and rafters and contains two built-in wooden beds, a modern round metal table, and a covered cupboard with a door that swings outward to create a table. Portions of the walls are covered with tin sheeting and newspapers. The wooden floor rests on 2" x 6" joists. Although the cabin is currently in need of repair, it appears that it was used at least on a seasonal basis until recently.

History: Building A is located on or near the site of Stephen Gervay's original homestead cabin. It appears similar in construction techniques to several other wood frame cabins constructed on Little Mountain in the 1930s to shelter shepherders. These small shelters were constructed by Judge Siverson, a carpenter hired by the Big Horn Livestock Company. This is the largest and best built of the remaining examples. Building B, the collapsed log barn, was probably constructed by Stephen Gervay for his homestead in about 1913.

The site is located on a 316.18-acre parcel of land patented by Elizabeth Gervay, widow of Stephen Gervay (HE Patent No. 0954395) on February 27, 1925. Stephen Gervay resided on the homestead and grazed sheep. According to homestead records, he also cleared about 30 acres of land on which he raised oats and hay and some potatoes. Gervay was a Hungarian

emigrant and married Elizabeth Thoman on December 4, 1923. She resided with him on the homestead until March 1924, when he died from exposure or a heart attack while hunting. Left alone on the homestead without knowing the fate of her husband, the pregnant Elizabeth sought help after her supplies ran out. She walked off Little Mountain through deep snow and managed to reach a ranch near Lovell three days later. She suffered from frostbite and exposure and lost her unborn baby. A search party subsequently found Stephen Gervay's body, and Elizabeth returned to her home in East St. Louis, Illinois. She subsequently patented the homestead and sold it in 1927.

The parcel was purchased by the Big Horn Livestock Company, which was formed on May 25, 1936. C.A. Lewis, Leo Hopkins, and C. Golden Welch were the principal officers. The place of business was the Town of Cowley, Big Horn County, Wyoming, and the corporation was capitalized at \$50,000. The Big Horn Livestock Company grazed 12,000 to 14,000 sheep on Little Mountain starting around the first of June each year. The sheep were driven part way up Little Mountain via a road built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, then up Pete's Canyon to the top. By mid-summer, the sheep were moved up into the Bighorn National Forest, then back down in October. C.A. Lewis died in 1964, and his son Rodney continued the operation. At that time, the outfit consisted of eighteen herders and two camp tenders. The sheep operation continued on Little Mountain until the 1980s, when the Bischoff family acquired most of the property and leases and grazed cattle.

Sources:

Big Horn County Clerk

n.d. Big Horn County Clerk, Land Abstracts (microfilm), Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne.

Bureau of Land Management

n.d. General Land Office Records, Land Patents. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>.

Crosby, Rodney L. Jr. (Grandson of Claude A. Lewis), Cowley, Wyoming, Telephonic Communication, 6 March 2009.

Hopkin, Neil (Grandson of Claude A. Lewis), Lovell, Wyoming, Telephonic Communication, 8 March 2009.

National Archives

n.d. Land Entry Records, General Land Office (NATF 84). National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

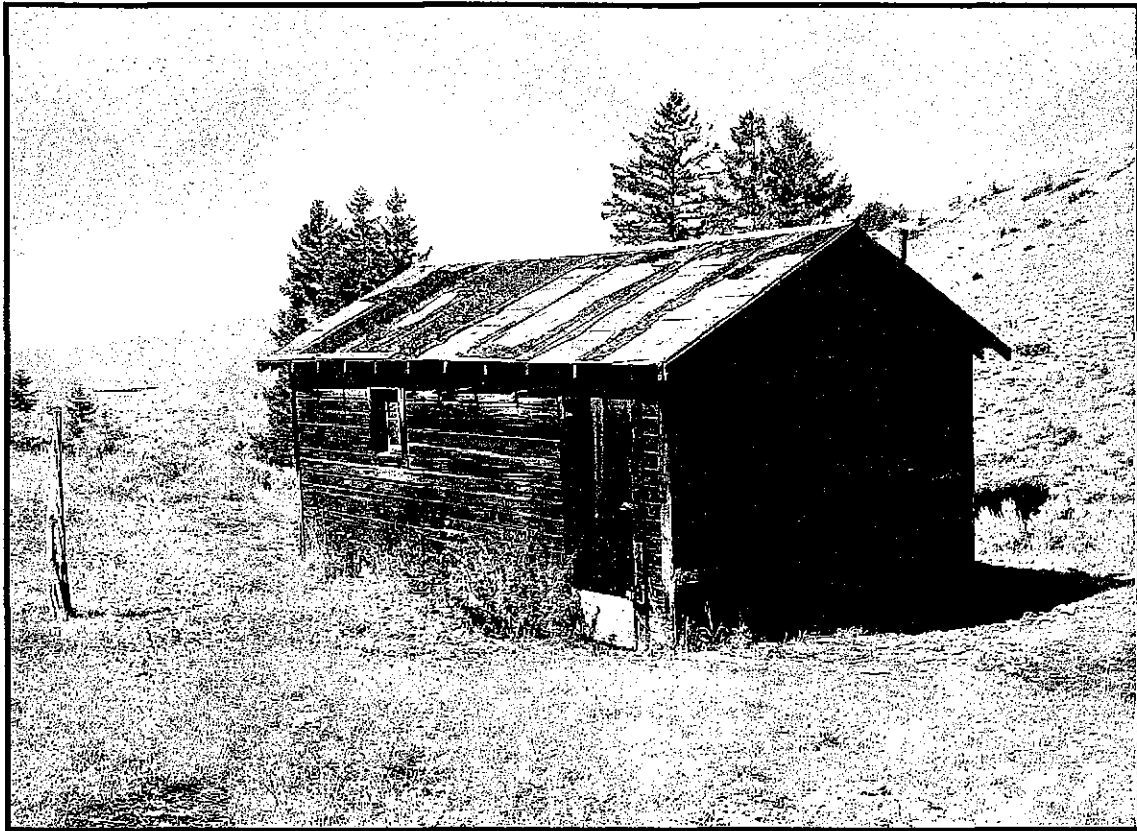
Wyoming State Archives

1936 Certificates of Incorporation for the State of Wyoming. Bighorn Livestock Company, Cowley, Wyoming, No. 42089. Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne.

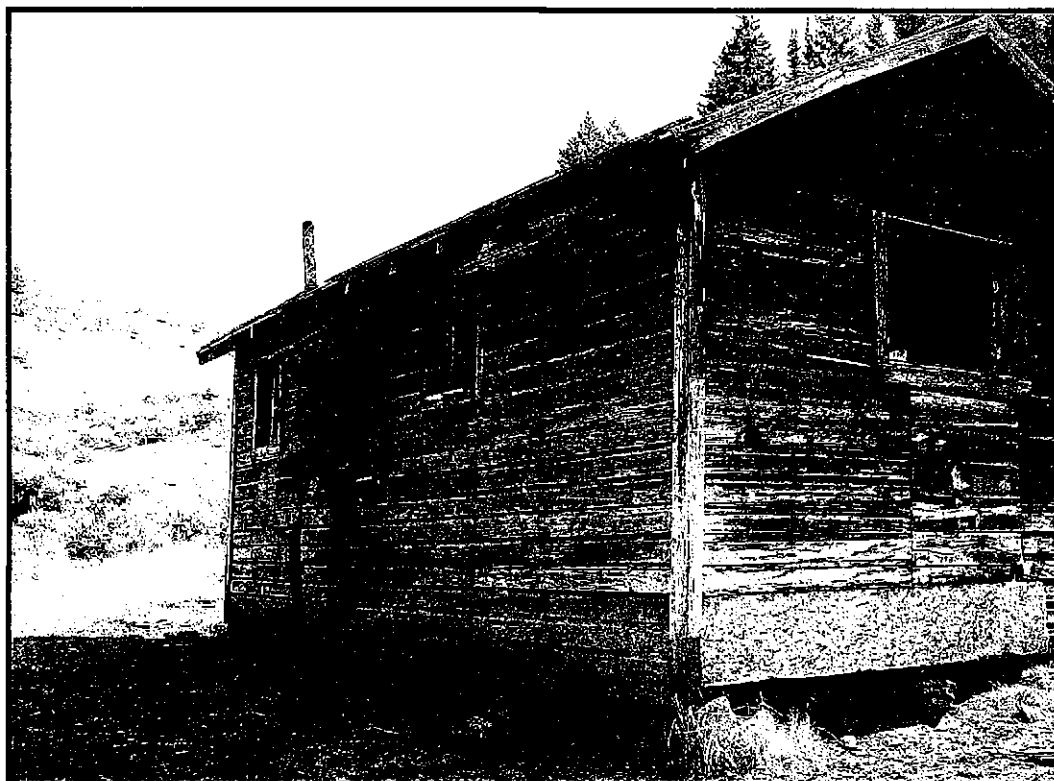
Historian: Robert G. Rosenberg, Rosenberg Historical Consultants, 739 Crow Creek Road, Cheyenne, WY. 82009.



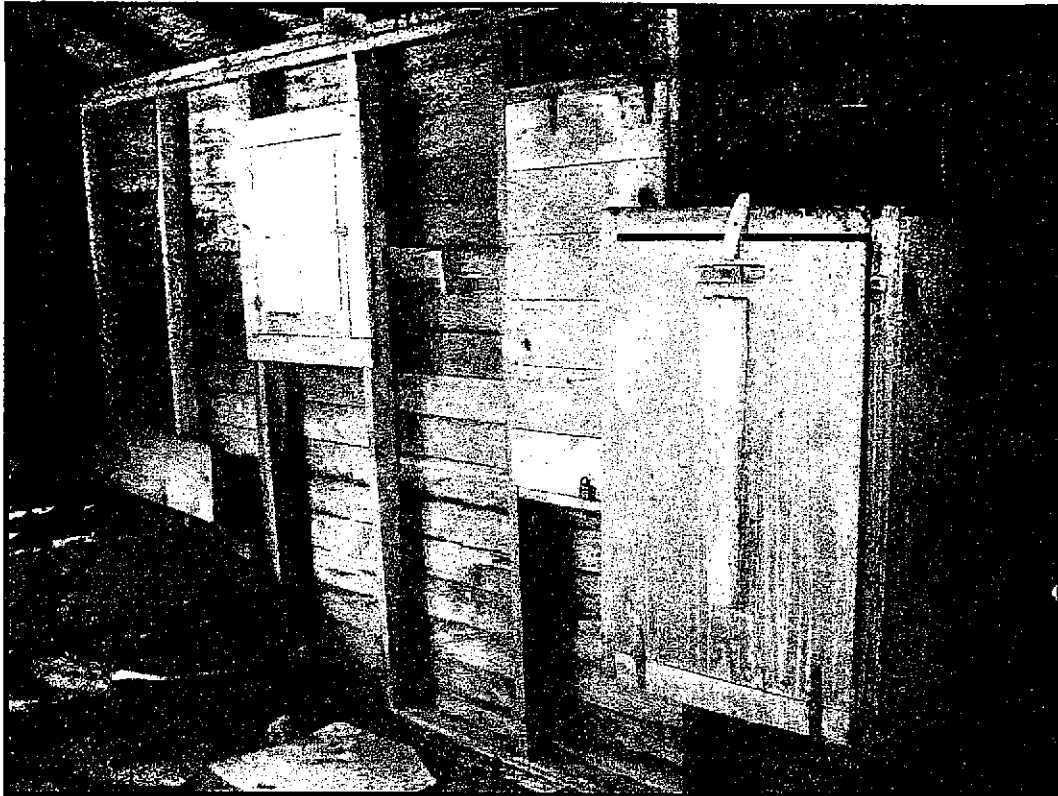
View to north of Gervay Homestead No. 2; Building A (sheepherder hut) is at left.



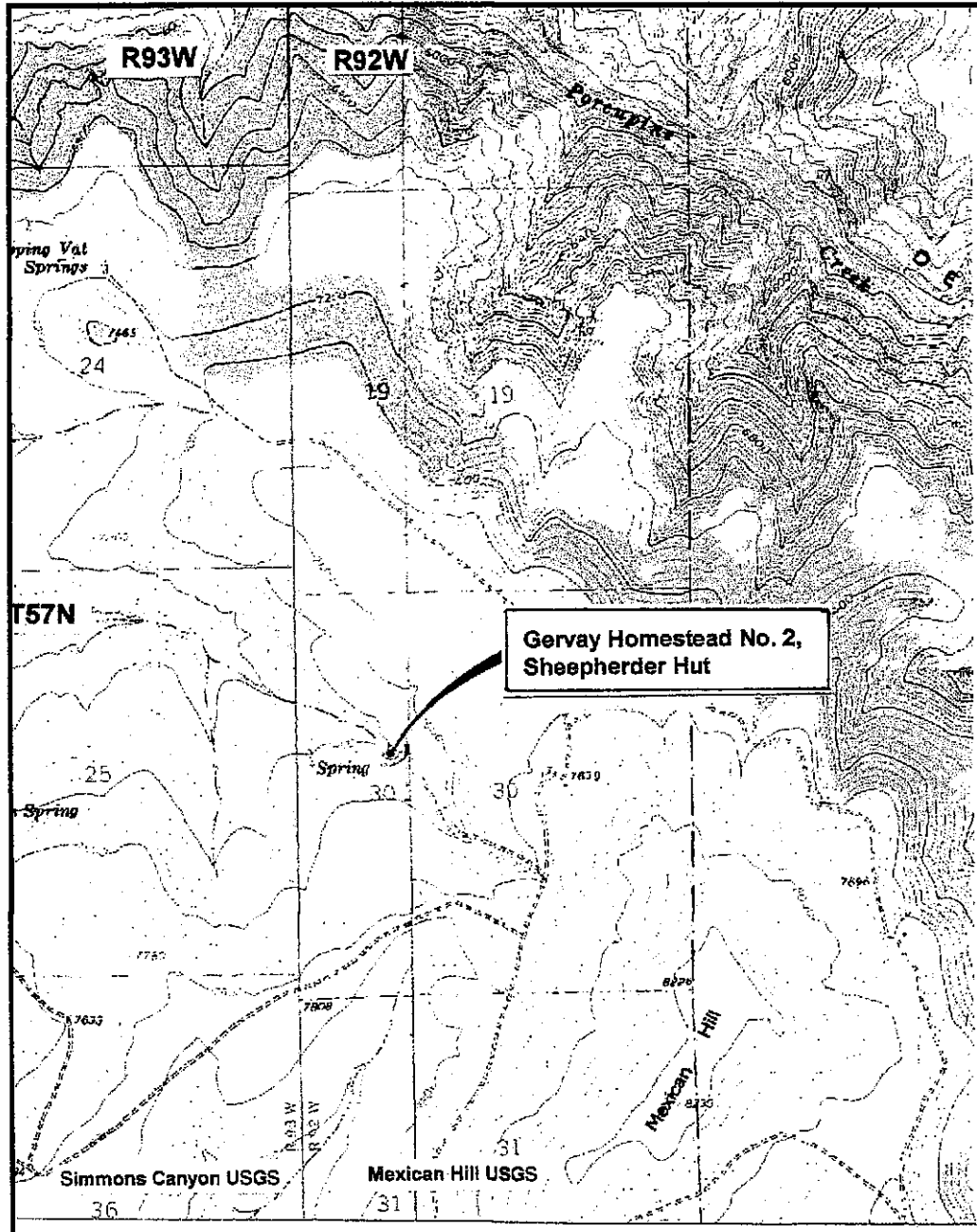
View to northwest of south (front) side and east side of Building A.



View to southeast of north side (rear) and west side of Building A.



Interior of Building A, containing a cupboard with a door that converts into a table.



Location map: Gervay Homestead No. 2, Shepherdur Hut (Building A). This homestead is located in the SW/SE/NW Section 30, T57N-R92W, on the Simmons Canyon 7.5' USGS quadrangle.